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according to his own conscience, the Pope claims a right to repeal those laws by his own pastoral authority.

This is decisive as to what *pastoral* authority the Pope claims. If he do not try to exercise it in this country at present, it is not because he thinks it wrong for him to claim it, but only because it might not be prudent; but, through Dr. Cullen and the Synod of Thurles, he may prepare the way for it; for, of course, the Pope thinks that he ought to have the same "pastoral authority" in Ireland that he exercises in New Grenada.

We submit this to the consideration of Irish Roman Catholics, who are sincerely attached to civil and religious liberty. When the Synod of Thurles, and the Roman Catholic priests and bishops claim to have to themselves the management of education, under the direction of the Pope, let Roman Catholics remember how the Pope undertakes to abolish, in New Grenada, the constitution of that country, and the law of that land, by which "the right of free education is defended."

THE TOUCHSTONE.

(Continued from page 9.)

OBJECTION 33.—Protestants deny that the pastors of the church have received from Christ the power of *remitting or retaining* sins, according to the state and disposition of the penitent.

Their Bible expressly affirms it (*John xx. 21, 22, 23*), where Christ tells his disciples—*As my Father hath sent me, even so I send you—Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.* Hence their *Common Prayer Book* expressly acknowledges, in the *Form of Absolution*, prescribed in the *Order for the Visitation of the Sick*, that our Lord Jesus Christ has left power to his church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him.

REPLY.—It is generally agreed among Christians, of all denominations, that Christ's ministers are authorized and bound to proclaim that (as is expressed in the *Church of England Prayer-book*) "God pardoneth and absolveth all that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel." And it is also universally admitted that pardon is *not* promised to the ungodly and impenitent, whatever they may profess with their lips. Now, to know with perfect certainty which class each particular person belongs to—the sincere or the insincere—is plainly impossible, except to one who should possess the power of reading men's hearts, so as to judge of their most secret thoughts. And this power does not seem to have been bestowed even on the Apostles. For they seem not to have been aware (see *Acts viii.*) that Simon the sorcerer was "in the bond of iniquity," till he had betrayed his own corruption of heart. And, certainly, Christian pastors of these days possess no such power of reading men's thoughts. They can only, therefore, declare with complete certainty the general promise of divine pardon to all the penitent. And when any minister pronounces absolution on any particular person, he must be understood to speak not *absolutely*, but *conditionally*—i. e., on the supposition of the person's having in his heart that faith and penitence which he professes. To pardon the impenitent is what God has not promised to do, nor authorized any one to do.

All this relates, you will observe, to sins against God. As for any wrong done by one man to another, the person wronged has, of course, a right to forgive it absolutely. And Christians are exhorted to forgive injuries—meaning, of course, so far as regards the injuries done to themselves; for no one can have any right to pardon an offence done to another. So, also, a Church can pardon any offence done to that Church, as a society; and so may a State, or any other community, pardon a wrong done to that community. And when any act is done, which is both an offence against the church and also against an individual, and, moreover, a sin against God also, the individual has the power to forgive, as far as he individually is concerned; but he has no power to forgive the offence against the church unless the church authorizes him to do so; and the church, again, has power to forgive the wrong done to the church; but sin against God, no man, and no body of men, can have any right to forgive, unless they can show that God has conferred on them that power along with what is *essential* to the right exercise of it—the gift of "discerning spirits," reading men's inward thoughts, and judging with certainty as to their sincerity.

OBJECTION 34.—Protestants deny that a special confession of sins is prescribed in Scripture, or was practised by the primitive Christians in the Apostles' time.

Their Bible confutes both these assertions; the former (*James v. 16*)—*Confess your faults one to another*—

that is, to the priests, or *elders of the church*, of whom the Apostle was speaking in the foregoing verses. The latter (*Acts xix. 18*)—*Many that believed came and confessed, and showed their deeds.*

REPLY.—The passage here cited proves the very contrary of the conclusion it is brought to establish. For the very circumstance that the Apostle had just before been speaking of the Elders [the Christian Ministers] shows that he could not have been here alluding to a special confession of sins by the people to the elders; else he would have said—"confess your sins to them;" or "confess your sins to those elders;" instead of which, he says—"confess your sins one to another," which would just as much imply confessing to a layman as to a minister.

So also that passage in the Acts not only says nothing of private confession to any priest, but plainly shows that no such thing was enjoined to Christians; else it would not have been said that "many" believers made such a confession, but that *all* of them necessarily did so.

The passage seems to indicate that some of the converts had, in their heathen life, committed grievous sins; and that these came forward, on becoming Christians, to proclaim openly, before the whole congregation, their repentance and abhorrence of such sins.

As for the Apostle James's exhortation, it is given in general terms, and is left to be applied by each man according to the best of his conscientious judgment. For neither Protestants nor Roman Catholics understand, by confessing sins "one to another," that every one is to make a special confession of every one of his sins to everybody he meets.

1. But most Protestants would admit that one who is conscious of having wronged his neighbour ought to acknowledge to him that he has done so, and ask his pardon.

2. That it will often be useful to ask the advice of a sensible and pious friend, as to the best mode of breaking through some sinful habit, or of repairing some injury we may have done, or the like. And

3. That it may sometimes be advisable to warn a child, or a friend, against some temptation he may be exposed to, by telling him of the sin into which it may have formerly led ourselves.

But as for "special confession" to a priest, as a duty regularly required of every Christian, Protestants plainly see that if any such thing had been known in the times of the Apostles, it would have been clearly and expressly laid down, and strongly insisted on in their writings; and in these there is not even the least hint of it to be found.

OBJECTION 35.—Protestants deny that the church has received a power from Christ to grant indulgences or pardons, for releasing of punishment due to sin.

Their Bible affirms it (*Matt. xvi. 19*)—*I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* Hence St. Paul (*2 Cor. ii. 10*) granted an indulgence to the incestuous Corinthian, forgiving him, as he expresses it, in the person of Christ.

REPLY.—Sins against God can be forgiven, it is plain, by God alone. And his pardon of all true penitents who trust in Christ, is proclaimed by all Protestant ministers. But they have not the power of so reading men's hearts as to know, with complete certainty, who are true penitents and sincere believers. Nor did even the Apostles possess this power; else they would have known the real character of Simon the sorcerer (see *Acts viii.*) before he betrayed his own wickedness.

But offences against a Church, that Church has (as we have said above) power to punish and to pardon. And, accordingly, every Protestant Church claims the right to exclude from the Lord's table, or to expel altogether from the community those who scandalize the congregation by gross wickedness of life; and again, on their submitting and reforming their life, to re-admit them.

This you may see (among other places) in the Rubric prefixed to the communion service of the Church of England.*

* "So many as intend to be partakers of the Holy Communion shall signify their names to the Curate, at least some time the day before; and if any of them be an open and notorious evil doer, or have done any wrong to his neighbours by word or deed, so that the congregation be thereby offended, the curate having knowledge thereof, shall call and advertise him, that in any wise he presume not to come to the Lord's table, until he hath openly declared himself to have truly repented, and mended his former naughty life, that the congregation may thereby be satisfied, which before were offended; and that he hath recompensed the parties to whom he hath done wrong, or at least declare himself to be in full purpose so to do, as soon as he conveniently may. The same order shall the curate use with those betwixt whom he perceiveth malice and hatred to reign, not suffering them to be partakers of the Lord's table, until he know them to be reconciled. And if any of the parties so at variance be content to forgive, from the bottom of his heart, all that the other hath trespassed against him, and to make amends, for that he himself hath offended, and the other party will not be persuaded to a godly unity, but remain still in his forwardness and malice, the minister, in that case, ought to admit the penitent person to the Holy Communion, and not him that is obstinate. Provided that every minister so repelling any, as is specified in this or the next precedent paragraph of this Rubric, shall be obliged to give an account of the same to the ordinary within fourteen days after at the farthest. And the ordinary shall proceed against those offending according to the Canon—Book of Common Prayer."

But as for punishments or pardons in the next world, these must, of course, be left altogether in the hands of the ALL-WISE, who alone can read men's hearts. As for "binding" and "loosing," these were, and, indeed, still are, the words in common use among the Jews to denote the establishing, and the annulling, of any regulation or ordinance.

And, accordingly, the Church of England exercises the right of making, and of altering, from time to time, regulations for the conducting of divine worship, for the admitting of ministers, &c. But she does not presumptuously take upon her to set forth any doctrines not contained in Scripture (such as purgatory, or the invocation of departed saints, &c.), nor to introduce any practices contrary to Scripture, such as altering the original institution of the Lord's Supper, by administering the bread without the wine, &c.

OBJECTION 36.—Protestants reject *extreme unction*—that is, the anointing of the sick; and deny that there is any promise of grace in Scripture to those that receive it.

Their Bible, in plain and express terms, recommends this sacrament, with a promise of grace to such as receive it (*St. James v. 14, 15*)—*Is any sick among you, let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and, if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

REPLY.—Protestants, it is true, do not pretend to the gift of miraculously healing the sick, which is evidently what the Apostle is speaking of. No more do the Roman Catholic priests; for they administer their "extreme unction" without any hope of being able to "raise up" the sick man; and, indeed, only when they believe him to be past recovery.

But in the days of the Apostles there were many who had the gift of miraculously curing the sick; and among other sick persons thus cured there were, doubtless, some of those who had been afflicted with sickness as an extraordinary and special chastisement for certain sins.—See *1 Cor. v. 5*, and *xi. 3*.

As for the so-called sacrament of unction, as practised in the Church of Rome, for the supposed benefit of the dying, there is no trace in Scripture of any such thing.*

OBJECTION 37.—Protestants deny that there is any grace given by the imposition, or laying on of the bishop's hands in holy orders.

Their Bible declares that there is, in the words of St. Paul to Timothy, whom he had ordained (*2 Tim. i. 6*)—*Stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands.*

REPLY.—It is very strange that any writer should either be so ignorant himself, or should so calculate on the ignorance of his readers, as to put forth such a statement. Any Roman Catholic who may wish to know how much truth there is in it, has only to attend and witness the public ordination of ministers in any Protestant Church; or to read for himself the Ordination Service in the Prayer-book of the Church of England.

OBJECTION 38.—Protestants commonly teach, that priests, and other religious persons that have vowed continency, may nevertheless marry, as Luther and the first reformers did; and that it is not damnable to them to break their faith given to God.

Their Bible tells them, that to break such a vow, made to God, is sinful and damnable (*Deut. xxiii. 21, 22, 23*)—*When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not be slack to pay it; for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee, and it would be sin in thee. But, if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. That which is gone out of thy lips, thou shalt keep and perform.* And *1 Tim. v. 11, 12*, where St. Paul, speaking of widows that are for marrying, after having made such a vow, says, they have damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.

REPLY.—Whatever may be thought of the lawfulness or propriety of vows under the Christian dispensation, yet, probably, all persons, of whatever persuasion, will admit that a vow, contract, or engagement, of whatever kind, is not binding on a person who has been tricked into it by false representations, as to the very matter relating to that engagement.

If, for instance, some one is induced to promise to vote, or to act in a certain way, by being assured that such is the desire of his father, or some one else whom he highly venerates; and if he afterwards discovers, and can prove, that this assurance is false, and that the reverse is the fact, most people would allow that such a promise is not binding.

So, also, if any one has been brought up in ignorance of what Scripture contains, and in a belief of what is contrary to Scripture, and has been thus seduced into making some rash vow, and afterwards finds that he has been imposed on, and that it will be more conducive to his leading a Christian life to depart from that engagement than to keep to it, in such a case he ought not to

* We beg to refer such of our readers as are desirous of knowing more upon this subject, to the article on the novelty of the doctrine of Extreme Unction, in our number for August, 1852.—CATHOLIC LAYMAN, 1st vol., p. 85.

be blamed for living such a kind of life as he may judge to be the most acceptable to God.

Suppose, for instance, a man had been brought up in the belief that celibacy is an eminent Christian virtue, and that he had never read Paul's warning against false teachers, "forbidding to marry;" and suppose he had been taught, either that the Apostle Peter was unmarried, or that he lived separate from his wife, and afterwards should have learned that he made her the companion of his travels, and that Paul claimed a right for himself and Barnabas to do the same, if they thought fit (1 Cor. ix. 5, 6); and that, so far from prescribing celibacy to the clergy, Paul gives particular directions as to their wives: suppose any one had been deluded into taking a vow of celibacy by such false representations as the above, if, on having his eyes opened to the truth, he threw off that vow, the blame, whatever there might be in the whole transaction, would be entirely with those who had deceived him.

OBJECTION 39.—Protestants reprehend the Catholic Church for receiving none to holy Orders but those that voluntarily embrace and promise a life of continency, that they may the more wholly devote themselves to the service of God, free from the distraction of a married life.

Their Bible, on the contrary, gives us to understand that this is highly commendable: because, *he that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.*—1 Cor. vii. 32, 33.

REPLY.—Whatever the Apostle does mean in this passage, it is, at least, quite clear what he does not mean. He certainly did not mean to forbid the clergy to marry, or to recommend them to make a vow of celibacy: else he would grossly contradict himself. For when he is writing to Timothy, and giving him very particular directions as to his choice of ministers, he is so far from charging him to select single men, or even to give them a preference, that he gives express directions respecting their wives and children.—See 1 Tim. iii. 2, 4, 11.

Much must depend on the kind of woman chosen for a wife. If every married man were sure to be drawn off by his wife from "caring for the things of the Lord," this would be a reason, not why the clergy alone, but why all Christians should remain single; for the Apostle is not speaking, in the passage before us, of the clergy, but of men in general. And when writing to Timothy he evidently supposes that a clergyman's wife may be, and ought to be, such a one as to prove a help rather than a hindrance in his Christian duties.

Much must depend, also, on the circumstances in which a man is placed. If he has reason to expect very fierce persecutions (as may, perhaps, have been the case with the Corinthians St. Paul was writing to), a wife and children would be likely to add to "his trouble in the flesh," which the Apostle was desirous to "spare them."—See 1 Cor. vii. 28.

And, again, if any one is about to undertake the task—as Paul and Barnabas did—of travelling from place to place to preach the Gospel, with a prospect of being frequently imprisoned, beaten, and stoned (see Acts xiv. 19) he would be wise to remain, as they did, unmarried.

If, for these, or any other good reasons, any man—clergyman or layman—is convinced that he can serve God better in a single life, for him it is plainly unnecessary that he should be bound by any prohibition or vow. And he will have this great advantage, that every one will understand his remaining single to be his own constant choice, and that he is not bound by some vow hastily made, and which, perhaps, he afterwards repents. Now, no Roman Catholic clergyman can be safe from suspicions of this kind; because it is known that, willingly or unwillingly, he must remain single. It is well known how much scandal has thence arisen.

And Protestants hold that it is "tempting God" to "put a yoke on men's necks," which it is plain the Apostle Paul never contemplated.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

ON IMAGE WORSHIP AND MIRACLES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR—As your have frequently professed, through the columns of your journal, the utmost willingness to correct any misstatements which you might advance, I need make no further apology for offering a few remarks on two of the most ridiculous and unfounded charges against the Roman Catholic religion, which form prominent topics for your discussion. If your object be to revile and sneer at the religion which I profess, it is an idle task to refute any slander you may think fit to promulgate; but if you wish to appeal to the understanding of sensible men on the principles of truth and reason, it seems to me most strange that any man, possessed with the smallest degree of either, should charge a large body of Christians, as enlightened and well educated as himself, with image worship, or any other species of idolatry, and who persists in the most sanctimonious manner in using arguments from Scripture, tradition, and reason, to dissuade them from

practices which they as sanctimoniously disavow, repudiate, and abhor.

In a quotation of the November number of your journal of the conversation of the Tinnevely gentleman, and in your letter, in the December journal, from a retired East Indian, you attempt to show a similarity between the Catholic respect for images and Bramin worship. You will, probably, agree with me, that in the worship which the Greeks and Romans gave to the statues consecrated to their deities, they believed that the spirit of God dwelt in them, and that the Bramins have a similar belief. But what Roman Catholic was ever known to believe that any spirit dwelt within the Crucifixion, or the image of the Blessed Virgin, or that these representations have any power beyond any other figures of wood or stone? So particular are we to prevent the most simple-minded from erring in this particular, that one of the first things which Roman Catholic children learn in their catechism is, that these pictures and images are not to be prayed to, as they have neither life nor sense. But, it may be asked, of what use are those images and pictures, and why keep them in our churches? I have an indistinct recollection of a sentiment addressed by Cicero to Cataline, which is apposite to this subject. He tells him that "he is surprised that whilst gazing on the pictures and statues of his ancestors within his house, he is not inspired with noble thoughts, in being reminded of their virtues." Surely, not less should the representation of our crucified Redeemer inspire us with love of him, and the memorials of our saints excite us to emulate their virtues. These representations preach in a language alike intelligible to all—the learned and unlearned, the simple and wise—they elevate the mind, and stimulate devotion. And how often to the expiring sinner, when the terror of death, and torture of disease, have bewildered his senses and overpowered his faculties, does the sight of the cross recall his recollection to the duties of religion, and bring his departing soul to resignation and trust in the crucified Redeemer? If your interpretation of the first clause of the commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or likeness," is in itself idolatry, you have presented to us an array of deities outnumbering the Pagan mythology in your statues of the Wellingtons, Nelsons, Williams, Georges, and a host of deified other personages; but if it is not idolatry to bestow upon them this tribute of respect, or that the veneration which you display at the inauguration of their statues, or the obeisance which is made before the empty throne, or the national flag, is not image worship, then do I say, that to place in our churches the crucifixion, the image of the Blessed Virgin, the image of St. Francis Xavier, or of St. Vincent de Paul, is not idolatry, and that it is more rational, and more becoming to a Christian to respect with this relative respect, those who have served God, than those who have served the world. Lest you might reject my expiation as not orthodox on Catholic doctrine, I shall quote for you the decision of the Council of Trent—"The images of Christ, of the Virgin Mother of God, and the other saints, are to be kept and retained, particularly in the churches, and due honour and veneration is to be paid to them. *Not that we believe there is any divinity or power in them, or that anything is to be asked of them, or that trust is to be placed in them, as the heathens of old trusted in their idols.*"

The other matter is your extreme gullibility respecting miracles, strikingly illustrated by an anecdote from your East Indian correspondent, of his having seen at Tournay an image of the Blessed Virgin, of which the sextoness told him that it had been collecting the balls of the besiegers until it became black in the face. There is an old proverb, that travellers hear and see strange things, and I have no doubt in the Griffin's having heard this strange story, and can fancy the laughter which this wag of a sextoness (who was probably a native of Kerry) has enjoyed at the amazement of "the poor ignorant haythen," to whom she related it, and for whose special edification she made it. There are, no doubt, many similar stories extant, some invented for joke, some for roguery, and some originating in the enthusiastic and overheated imagination of religious fanaticism; but these are not to be attributed to any religion or any section of mankind. We find instances of credulity and imposition in all ages, and in spiritual as well temporal matters; knaves preying upon fools; but as to the fact of miracles, you will admit, that the Lord has worked such wonders through the medium of his servants; and that whether we regard his mighty power in causing the waters of the Red Sea to arise at the command of Moses, and afterwards to burst with overwhelming force on the host of Pharaoh, or making iron swim upon the stream at the well of Eliseus, nothing is mean or insignificant in Him. We have no reason to suppose that he has ceased in giving such proofs of His power or favour; or can we tell in what way, or by whose hands will miracles be wrought according to His will? "Who hath known the mind of the Lord?" Whilst I utterly discard such absurd stories as the pretended miracles to which you refer, no matter how great the number of rogues or fools you name, as a proof that they were believed in, yet am I willing to acknowledge the manifestation of God's power in all the ways he

may think fit to display it; but I would require the proofs of miracles to be beyond all proofs that would satisfy me on natural occurrences; proofs that must remove every doubt as to the possibility of sense or reason being deceived, and that the miracle should be something worthy of Divine wisdom and beneficence.

On this subject of which I have written, I must conclude by admitting, that there are bad practices amongst ignorant and bad Catholics; and there are forged miracles amongst the wicked and the foolish. Such things were in the Church, even in the time of the Apostles. But I do most firmly maintain that no such bad practices or forged miracles are countenanced by the Catholic Church, no more than they were countenanced by the Apostles.

SIDRACH.

We readily insert the letter of our correspondent. We could have wished, indeed, for his own sake, that he had abstained from the use of so many angry words; for we may safely appeal to the judgment of our readers, whether we have ever given insertion, since the commencement of our journal, to a single statement, the object of which was to "revile" or "slander" the faith of our Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen. But, leaving this charge to refute itself, we must express our regret that our correspondent has overlooked a request which we have frequently made, that in the letters addressed to us, only one subject should be discussed at a time. We often find considerable difficulty in giving insertion to communications which run to an undue length; and the two subjects which "Sidrach" has introduced in his letter, are obviously of too great importance to be disposed of in a few cursory remarks. Notwithstanding this difficulty, however, we venture to make one or two observations on the letter of our correspondent.

And, in the first place, "Sidrach" has altogether misrepresented the opinions of the Greeks and Romans on the subject of image-worship. The enlightened portion of the heathen world by no means believed that the spirit of the God dwelt in the image. They used the image to recall the idea of the Deity more vividly to their minds; and it is very remarkable that the arguments by which they defended the practice of image worship against the early Fathers and apologists for Christianity, are precisely those which Roman Catholic writers now use. For example, in the writings of the Platonic philosopher, Maximus Tyrius, we find the following passage:—"As spoken language has no need of letters, which were devised as helps for human weakness, that by the aid of these signs the words might be recalled to the memory, thus the nature of the gods in no wise stands in need of statues or images; but poor, weak human nature being separated from the divinity as far as earth is from heaven, has invented these signs, upon which it bestows the divine names and appellations. Those whose memory is so strong that by a vigorous exertion of mind they can reach up to heaven and approach the divinity, have, perhaps, no need of images. But such men are rare, and you may perchance nowhere meet, even in a crowd, with a person always mindful of the deity, and who can dispense with the aid of images." Is not this, in substance, the very argument made use of by our correspondent?

"Sidrach" quotes, in support of his own views, the decree of the Council of Trent, which disavows any belief of a "divinity or power residing in the image itself." Well, the ancient heathen philosophers would have said the very same thing. "A man must be an arrant fool," said Celsus, "who believes that the stone, or the wood, or the gold is itself a god, or that it is anything else than a mere statue dedicated to the God." But whatever the Council of Trent may say, we beg leave to doubt whether Roman Catholics do not sometimes believe that a divinity or power resides in some statues more than others. If images and pictures are merely to be used as helps to the memory and imagination, according to our correspondent's theory, one image ought to do as well as another; and there would be no sense in a man's making a pilgrimage to offer up his prayers to the winking image of the Virgin Mary at Rimini, or to the image in the Casa Santa at Loretto, when he could find just as good and, perhaps, as faithful an image nearer home. It is a notorious fact, however, that the contrary doctrine is inculcated in Italy on the very highest ecclesiastical authority; and we cannot see on what grounds these pilgrimages to favourite shrines can be defended, except on the supposition that the material image or picture possesses some special virtue, which is denied to other similar objects. We would be glad to learn "Sidrach's" explanation of this seeming inconsistency.

Even if it were true, however, that the benefits which images could bestow, in quickening our zeal and devotion, were a thousandfold greater than our correspondent represents, we consider that the plain prohibition of Scripture against any use of images in religious worship ought to be a conclusive argument against their adoption. "Sidrach," indeed, attempts to prove that Protestants act inconsistently in interpreting the commandment—

* Maximi Tyrii Dias. p. 80, Lond. 1740.

† Orig. contra Cel. p. 373. Cant. 1668.